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Women's Voluntary Services for Civil Defence

Great Britain

by Mrs. Gordon Konantz

(Margaret Konantz)

Issued by

The Department of National War Services

OTTAWA

EDMOND CLOUTIER

PRINTER TO THE KING'S MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY

1944



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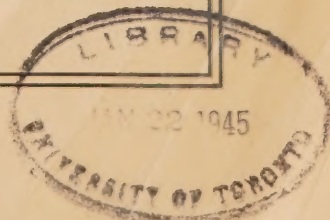
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PREFACE

In view of the splendid contribution in so many forms which the women of the Dominion have made in aid of the successful prosecution of the war, the Department of National War Services arranged that four Canadian women—who were prepared to accept the risks and to whom accordingly the Department is very grateful—should proceed to the United Kingdom, there to observe the voluntary work being performed by the women of Britain.

Selection was made of three Canadian voluntary workers—Mrs. Gordon Konantz of Winnipeg and Miss Agathe Dore of Montreal, both of whom had been closely associated with women's voluntary services; Mrs. Jules Laine of Toronto, a prominent worker with the Canadian Red Cross Society; and, for departmental purposes, Miss Helen Doherty, a member of the staff of the Department of National War Services.

The information they were able to secure is now being made available in this form to the women of Canada, in the hope that it will be a further inspiration to their fellow workers who have so valiantly carried on.

WOMEN'S VOLUNTARY SERVICES FOR CIVIL DEFENCE, GREAT BRITAIN

INTRODUCTION

The British Government, in June, 1938, saw the need for substantial help from women in the development of the Air Raid Precaution Services in preparing the civil population to withstand air attack. The Dowager Marchioness of Reading was asked to form an organization which would bring women volunteers from every walk of life to the aid of their country. It was arranged that the government would provide for the administration expenses of this new organization. The responsibility for civilian defence at this time came under the Home Secretary, but was transferred in November of the same year to the Lord Privy Seal and the Minister of Home Security. It is to be noted that the statutory duty of the provision of Air Raid Precautions, Evacuations, Nursing and other services, rests with the Local Authorities in Great Britain, under the direction of the Government departments concerned.

As W.V.S. was promoted to assist the local authorities in carrying out Civil Defence duties, the pattern followed by the organization of W.V.S. follows that of the Civil Defence Regions and the Scheme-making authorities (mainly the Administrative Counties, Metropolitan and County Boroughs,). Each Region is under the charge of an Administrator, who is the senior W.V.S. officer, and works in close co-operation with the officers of the Regional Commissioner's staff. There is also a Regional Organizer, who is specially qualified to undertake the field work. Under the Regional Office are County and County Borough Organizers, with Centre Organizers for the Municipal Boroughs, and Urban and Rural Districts in that County. For purposes of decentralization, the work is again broken down to villages and streets, where there are Representatives responsible for the work and efficiency of the volunteers.

The W.V.S. was first intended to be a recruiting body for women anxious to do A.R.P. work—its original title being "Women's Voluntary Services for A.R.P.", but by January 1939, the scope of women's work was found to be far greater and the name of the organization was altered to Women's Voluntary Services for Civil Defence. This enabled it to embrace Civil Defence and ancillary services.

All women in Britain between the ages of 18-50 who have no children under the age of 14 must work 46-48 hours a week, and are directed into jobs through the Ministry of Labour.

Under the Registration for Employment order and National Services Acts, 1942, W.V.S. surrendered practically all its younger mobile members to take up full-time work in the Services or in Industry, but special agreements have been made between the Ministry of Labour and W.V.S. regarding the application for the retention of full-time and part-time volunteers, who were within the call-up regulation. These volunteers were engaged in work in certain specified categories at that time, and were considered essential to the organization. Such volunteers must put in the required number of hours' work, giving their time as if they were staff members.

The majority of members throughout the country have their own homes to manage and are only able to give a few hours at a time, but by arranging everything on a rota basis, it has been possible to do continuous work. Thus W.V.S. has proved that it is possible to run a full-time organization on part-time labour.

The General Secretary's department at Headquarters consists of full-time and part-time Civil Servants.

Upon the outbreak of war, a declaration was made by the Minister of Home Security, and a circular dated September 14, 1939, was issued to all Local Authorities notifying them "that W.V.S. had been asked by the Government and had agreed to continue to carry out in wartime those duties with which they had been entrusted by individual authorities, together with such other duties of a similar character as may arise." It is under this authority that the great variety of work, which W.V.S. has undertaken, has been done since war started in 1939. At this time the Local Authorities were again reminded that office accommodation, heat, light and clerical assistance were grant-aided services which they could provide—that W.V.S. was included among National Service Committees as it had been set up to encourage recruitment both in the fighting and civil defence services. In December, 1941, the position of W.V.S. was reaffirmed by the Ministry of Home Security to Local Authorities in the following terms:

"in a broad general sense it may be said that as respects their Civil Defence functions, the Minister regards W.V.S. as occupying viz-a-viz his Department and Local Authorities much the same relationship as that of the Women's Auxiliary Services to the Armed Forces of the Crown."

At the outbreak of war, the W.V.S. had 335,924 members. In February, 1944, the membership had increased to over 1,050,000.

Outline of Activities

In addition to the work undertaken for the Ministry of Home Security, in Civil Defence, W.V.S. also give services to a large number of other Government Departments all of which is given below:

Ministry of Home Security

- Recruitment of women for staffing all forms of A.R.P.
- Co-operation with the workers in street organization and the housewives section.
- Inspection and repair of gas-masks and fitting of baby helmets.
- General co-operation in invasion defence scheme.
- Staffing of A.R.P. canteens.
- Feeding of Civil Defence workers after raids.
- Operation of Volunteer Car Pools for the Regional Commissioners.

Ministry of Health

- Evacuation (billeting, sick-bays, communal feeding, centres, hostels, social centres).
- Staffing of rest centres, administrative and information services.
- Searcher service other than that undertaken by B.R.C.S.
- Clothing of bombed people.
- Reception of foreign refugees.
- Care of evacuees from Gibraltar, Channel Islands and the Far East.
- Assistance in blood transfusion campaign.
- Domestic help in hospitals.
- Regional toy-making schemes.
- Help with diphtheria immunization.
- Welfare work in public air raid shelters.
- Recruitment of women for water decontamination.
- Provision of gas cleansing facilities and simple first aid in private houses.
- Emergency help scheme.

Admiralty

Vegetable service for minesweepers, etc.
 Comforts for official depots.
 Canteens.
 Hospitality for W.R.N.S.

War Office

Canteens (W.V.S. is association member of the Council of Voluntary War Work.)
 Clubs and hostels.
 Comforts (in connection with the Directorate of Voluntary Organizations.)
 Mending schemes (W.V.S. is official sock darning to the Army).
 Libraries.
 Short leave hospitality for personnel.
 General welfare work.
 Home Guard co-operation in various ways, chiefly with feeding.

Air Ministry

Hospitality for R.A.F. and W.A.A.F. personnel.
 Hostels for W.A.A.F.
 Canteens.
 Arranging classes on releasing men from crashed aircraft.

Board of Education

Helping to staff school canteens and transport hot meals.
 Helping with clothing schemes for evacuated children.
 Co-operation with Girls' Training Corps.
 Helping with Domestic Front campaign.

Ministry of Labour and National Service

Industrial billeting surveys.
 Reception and hospitality schemes for transferred workers.
 Help with "Holidays at Home" campaign.
 Forming out-work centres.
 Help with publicity with regard to recruitment of part-time workers.
 Help with wartime nurseries for children of war workers.
 Mobile canteen services for dockers or workers on factory building sites (temporary schemes).

Board of Trade

Children's clothing and shoe exchanges.
 Collecting of coupons for gift clothing in all depots.
 Help in explaining clothes rationing scheme.
 Information on withdrawing Traders' Register in rural areas.

Assistance Board

Co-operation in the provision of immediate clothing assistance to air-raid victims.
 Provision of welfare arrangements for staffs of mobile office units, and training volunteers for emergency work.

Ministry of Aircraft Production

Feeding of workers on constructional sites.
 Sorting rivets for aircraft factories.
 Collection of aluminum.

Ministry of Food

Community Feeding Centres and British Restaurants—Help in staffing.
 Pie schemes.
 Emergency Feeding Centres.
 Queen's Messenger Convoys.
 Help with campaign for building field kitchens.
 Distribution of food gifts from overseas.
 Issuing of fruit juices and cod liver oil.
 Food publicity and food leader schemes.
 Assistance in issuing of ration books
 Simple instruction in cooking and nutrition

Ministry of Information—

Hospitality for American forces in Great Britain
 Tours for overseas visitors
 Distribution of leaflets, posters, etc.
 Organization of meetings for M.O.I. speakers and film shows
 Co-operation over the production of films and publications
 Providing drivers and announcers for M.O.I. cars in emergency
 Schemes of hospitality for American forces

Ministry of Supply—

Salvage, publicity, canvassing and collection
 The "Cog" scheme
 Collection of medicinal herbs
 Garnishing of camouflage nets

Ministry of Pensions—

Co-operation over taking war orphans into W.V.S. War Nurseries

Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries—

Land Army. Interviewing recruits, billeting and general welfare
 Co-operation with County War Agriculture Committee, for the recruitment of part-time land workers
 Feeding of agricultural workers
 Assistance in Dig for Victory campaign.

Dominions Office and Colonial Office—

Gifts from overseas
 Hospitality schemes

Ministry of War Transport—

Feeding of dockers from mobile canteens
 Assistance in clothing shipwrecked Merchant Seamen

Ministry of Fuel—

Help with Fuel Economy publicity

Ministry of Works—

Emergency feeding of constructional workers

National Savings—

Formation of Savings Groups, specializing in Street Groups Assistance in special "Weeks"

Who Benefits From These Activities?*Men, Women and Children—*

1. Victims of bombing
2. Evacuees from occupied countries
3. Repatriated prisoners of war
4. Civilians in need

Men and women of the Armed Forces—of the Merchant Navy.

ACTIVITIES OF WOMEN'S VOLUNTARY SERVICES

In this study of the work of the W.V.S. all arrangements and appointments were made through the Overseas Division at Headquarters.

The plan was to first visit London, meet the Chief Regional Advisor and each one of the Specialists, and discuss with them the set-up of the organization and the work of the departments.

From London I went into Region 3, Nottinghamshire, a rural area, visited the Regional Office, saw the work of a country borough (Nottingham), a county (Peterborough) a centre (West Bridgeford) and a village (Haston). During a period of three weeks I went from London into Bermondsey, Battersea, Fulham, Shoreditch, Holburn, Hackney, and Putney—to York, to Nottingham, Peterborough and throughout that part of the country. I also went to Ashbridge, to Slough, to Heathway. In Scotland I went to Edinburgh, Glasgow and spent a day in Perthshire.

The knowledge gained for this report was obtained from the many office interviews, W.V.S. publicity pamphlets and field trips to various projects.

Training of Volunteers

All volunteers desiring to become members of W.V.S. must take five basic training lectures:

1. Place of W.V.S. in Civil Defence
2. Anti-gas
3. Immediate Aid
4. Fire Fighting
5. Elementary A.R.P.

After this course has been completed women must give 60 hours service as well as show a definite willingness to give far more of their time before they may receive their W.V.S. badge, the emblem of membership.

From the earliest days of organizing, the responsibility of any job the women undertook, the necessity of doing whatever training was considered valuable and the carrying out of the services they had offered, whether full-time work or for only one hour a week, has been impressed upon the volunteers.

A.R.P. work is given priority over all other activities. W.V.S. is responsible to the Local Authorities for providing personnel for many auxiliary services, such as rest and feeding centres, rehousing of the homeless, shelter warden, report centres and control rooms, casualty notification bureaux, respirator repair depots, etc. In addition to manning these auxiliaries, it was found that the housewives who could not work away from home, could play a most important part in Britain's war effort, and so the Housewives' Section of the W.V.S. was formed, on the pattern of the warden's service with its first duty to help the warden in caring for their neighbors.

The task of organizing any community down to a Block Plan is a gigantic one. Each is made up of women with different temperaments, political and religious viewpoints and having all grades of intelligence. There are always women who have never shared a community life nor accepted responsibilities beyond their home.

The greatest credit goes to Lady Reading for her skill in choosing the right people for the right job. The Specialists she has chosen for the many departments at Headquarters and the 12 Regional Administrators, all are outstanding women who must share in this tremendous work.

Specialists are given the right to develop their own departments. Regional Directors have been trained in leadership and are given the responsibility of developing other leaders in organizing their own territories. They have been

taught about the "power" to make people do willingly what otherwise they would not do. They have been schooled to have steadfastness of purpose and to have a willingness to learn, and that only by knowing their job can they gain self-confidence. At all times they must have enthusiasm for their work and faith in the people they get to work for them. They know that they must be ready to give praise where it is due, and to be constructive in all criticism. They have been told that in developing leadership there must be training meetings regularly, that these meetings should be routine, no matter how short, with a chairman, minutes and brief reports, that plans should be laid in detail for three or four meetings to come. They have learned by experience that a meeting should have some fun attached to it, for women are tired and need relaxation, and laughter seems to clear the mind. It has been found that visual education, playlets, quizzes, seem to have a far more lasting effect than lectures, and if, at meetings, tea and cookies are served, there is bound to be a good turn-out.

The training of women for all types of work during the last five years has been a remarkable story in Volunteer Service. I could see the results of such training throughout all W.V.S. activities.

A Headquarters staff member in taking me to visit a borough office, immediately placed full responsibility on the borough chairman of explaining the office set-up. A Regional Clothing Director in exhibiting a local Clothing Depot, though she had the greater knowledge of clothing, would give the responsibility to the local officer to demonstrate the work. It was the same throughout the whole organization. No one was "by-passed". Every woman was made to accept the responsibility she had pledged to undertake.

Regional administrators, organizers, county borough and county organizers, municipal, urban and rural, and village representatives have given the most amazing amount of time to organizing their particular areas. Some who live in the country, have been willing to live in the cities from Monday to Saturday. Others have moved into the town halls, taken a room so that they could see the women in their districts in the evenings. All are working continuously, thinking up ingenious ways of getting and keeping the volunteers' interest.

District Chairmen are not discouraged by small attendance at training meetings, for if the meetings are interesting the news soon spreads. They make every effort to get through the necessary business as quickly as possible and then with special features attempt to arouse the women's interest.

As has been stated, all W.V.S. centres are dependent on the local authorities for support. Working so closely with Government, women all over Britain are taking a much more active interest in local affairs, and studying community problems. They are beginning to realize that their towns are their responsibility—that they belong to them and not to the Mayor or the Council. They have seen what can be had by making representations to the Councils. (e.g., only 20 women need petition for a nursery school to have it set up in a district). They know how the need for hostels, canteens, recreational centres, has been met. They are now thinking of the value of youth, social and health centres in a community. Women now like to join in town planning schemes. There is a general social consciousness developing within all women's groups, and for this reason classes in citizenship are popular, which is Civil Defence in its true meaning.

Air Raid Precautions

As previously stated, A.R.P. work is given priority over all other activities for W.V.S. workers. As this is a phase of Volunteer Service that has not been developed to any great extent in Canada, I did not go into all its ramifications in Great Britain. The following is a brief story of A.R.P. work as carried on by W.V.S. members as I saw it myself.

One night when I was there, London had an air-raid . . . the barrage was terrific . . . flares lit up the sky until it was as bright as day. Ack ack shells burst all around . . . everything in my room shook. It was terrifying.

I pictured women in steel helmets putting out incendiary bombs . . . tossing them into pails of sand. I thought that when I heard the "All Clear" signal, their job would be done. But little did I know, for I had no idea the army of women bombs would call out. I saw them in action. The next afternoon when I had almost forgotten the night before, I was taken down into an area that had been quite badly hit.

It was then I realized I had not stopped to think what happened to people when they lost their homes . . . beyond staying with friends. It never dawned on me that sometimes there are not enough friends to go around, for there I found a Rest Centre . . . set up in an old school. Women had done their best to make it cheerful. The huge blackout curtains had gay baskets of flowers painted on them. Bright cushions had been put on day couches and in comfortable rocking chairs. Beautiful Canadian patchwork quilts covered the somber army blankets on the beds. To my amazement, I was told that dozens of women who ran this Centre, had all been trained for the job. That puzzled me for it looked like such an ordinary job . . . one that anyone of us might do. Soon I found out why training was necessary. I saw one woman who was terribly upset and I watched the W.V.S. worker take both her hands and hold them tight. I saw another little woman weeping to herself in a corner—no one with her—but I was told that weeping was a safety valve, and just to give her time.

I heard a Bully talking loudly. A worker just looked him straight in the eye and was most polite.

I was taken on to the nursery that had been provided for the children. It had toys these children had never seen before. Here, women amused little girls and boys and watched over tiny babies. From the nursery I went into the Clothing Depot. Up to then I hadn't thought of the problems of clothes. I found a whole family . . . father and mother and nine children, being outfitted by women who showed the most tremendous patience in this tough assignment. Then I went into the Dining Hall. I had forgotten about food too. Women were just putting the last dishes away after having cooked a good hot meal for the people I had seen around the Centre. As I was leaving, I stopped and looked around. I thought to myself that the workers had learned their lesson well. They hadn't gained that knowledge of human understanding in one brief session. And I was told that all over Britain, hundreds and hundreds of Rest Centres had been organized, just like this one.

Then outside, I walked over to the streets that had been hit by the raid. In the middle of a road I saw a mobile kitchen with men and women crowded around it chatting cheerfully over a cup of tea. I looked inside the canteen and there I found women in the green uniform . . . their sleeves rolled up . . . washing cups, brewing tea, cutting sandwiches. They had been there from early morning. I noticed across the way a couple with a baby carriage, filled with all the odds and ends of a household, curtains, picture frames, clothing, moving to a neighbour's. I heard hammering everywhere, and saw men and women fixing up the empty windows of their houses for the blackout. I saw no tears . . . I heard no complaints.

Everywhere women with special armbands helped wardens. They had lists of names, names of the people who lived on the streets, of the homes they could go to, of where they had gone to.

I noticed a pale blue flag tied to a telegraph pole. I wondered what it meant. Over I went and there I found two women sitting at a little table in the basement of a house that had been completely blitzed . . . no doors . . . no windows . . . no plaster left. This was an Inquiry Point . . . the pale Blue Flag, the signal for peace of mind, Information.

I looked in, then I stepped over the rubble, and went down into that basement and stood behind one of the women. I listened to what went on. I will never forget the frightened look on the faces of the people who came to ask about their relatives. I'll never forget the look of confidence those women at the table had as they went about their work.

These women volunteers had been on the job since six that morning, and I was told that all over Britain, hundreds and hundreds of women were ready to go out too, just as these women had, early in the morning, and all had been trained to deal with the distressed.

Over in the park, I found the Queen's Messengers. These were the women with a convoy of 12 mobile kitchens, ready to feed 10,000 people if necessary. They were peeling masses of vegetables, potatoes and carrots, turnips for a stew; others were making a hot pudding, and I knew when their job was done they would go back to their depot, to clean down their kitchens spotlessly, knowing that from dawn to dusk they must be ever ready for a call.

Distribution of Food

The feeding of the British people since 1939 had been done with the greatest skill by the Ministry of Food. Every housewife must buy her rationed goods from one grocer and one butcher. She is urged to make use of them all as food allotments are made for a well balanced diet, which is just enough to keep a person healthy. Under this scheme, butchers and grocers can be assured of always having rationed goods for their clients. Children under 5 are given extra rations in milk, butter, eggs, meat and fish, as well as receiving cod liver oil and orange juice. Great care is taken to see that the children under 5 get this extra food and that it isn't distributed among other members of the family.

An educational program is carried on extensively throughout the country on how to plan and prepare meats, making the most of rations and how to shop to get the greatest value.

One finds Food News Items in the Monthly W.V.S. Bulletins and other pamphlets, such as "new recipes", "menu suggestions for the festive seasons", "advice on drying and preserving of fruits and vegetables". Food exhibitions are held on market days in the larger cities and many then taken into the villages. These are most popular. Publicity stunts such as a "Potato Pete Fair" are often organized to promote the use of potatoes.

The Ministry of Food has encouraged the establishment of Community Feeding Centres all over the country; thus we find thousands of women preparing food for others.

The British Restaurants

These grew out of the Londoners' Meal Services. So popular are these restaurants that there are now 2,145 in the country, with 17,000 W.V.S. women giving regular help. It has been found that the people like eating together and it is believed that such restaurants will be carried into a peacetime program, and that with careful planning there need never be any conflict with local restaurants. The City of Birmingham has demonstrated this already by setting up 22 restaurants which have been organized and operated by a committee of local restaurant managers. All meals are served on a cafeteria style. The dining halls are bright and kept particularly clean.

The Pie Scheme

Up until 1941, people in the country were not able to supplement their rations as those in the larger cities were by having noonday meals in restaurants and canteens, and the Pie Scheme, a W.V.S. experiment, was officially adopted

by the Ministry of Food. Extra rationed goods were obtained and women volunteers baked pies by the hundreds, taking them into the country for sale. Today, we find the Pie Scheme working in 2,734 villages, with over a million steak or pork pies, and Cornish pastries being sold each week.

Canteens

Approximately 48,000 W.V.S. women are serving meals in canteens. Civil defence canteens are set up in factories, in military districts, at railway stations, at the docks, in office buildings and in hostels. In the majority of these, all kitchen help is paid staff, with volunteers assisting in operating them. Mobile kitchens or canteens are of many types. Large ones help feed troops, people in blitzed areas and wherever there is a need for community feeding. Women who drive these are prepared to go from one part of the country to the other. Tea vans provide hot soup, tea and snacks. They are seen every place, on the docks, throughout the country, serving soldiers in small encampments. Their size makes them easy to handle on narrow country roads.

School Meals

Volunteers assist school teachers in giving school children hot noon dinners. The results have been most successful and Boards of Education are now planning for such meals to be carried into a peacetime program.

The Queen's Messengers

These special convoys, made up of 12 mobile kitchens, which are painted pale blue and yellow, go into blitzed areas, upon call, and are proceeded by outriders, with pale blue pennants flying. The very sight of them coming into the district raises the morale of the people. The convoy is a self-sufficient unit, capable of feeding 10,000 people. It is made up of:

- 2 water lorries—300 gals. each.
- 2 kitchen lorries.
- 22 soyer boilers with kitchen equipment.
- 2 stores lorries.
- 2 mobile canteens to take out sandwiches.
- 1 utility van.
- 1 welfare personnel for preparing food for volunteers.

The convoy is usually driven into a park, where it forms a semi-circle. Stoves and all equipment are set up immediately. The women are thoroughly trained for their jobs and with great efficiency can prepare good hot meals for any number of people. There are 21 of these convoys stationed in various parts of the country. They serve "from dawn to dusk".

Emergency Feeding

Every W.V.S. member is taught how to make a stove out of blitzed materials, bricks, mud, drain pipes and bits of tin. These stoves are approximately 4 x 6 by 2' high. I was told that three women could make such a stove in 25 minutes and that three could make a stove and cook a 2-course meal for 100 people in 2 hours.

Vegetables for Minesweepers

Fresh vegetables are collected by W.V.S. women living on the coasts, for minesweepers. This has been proved to be an excellent service. Such crews never know how long they will be out at sea. Fresh vegetables are considered a luxury.

DISTRIBUTION OF CLOTHING

All new clothing in Great Britain is rationed and every man, woman and child has clothes coupons, amounting to 60 a year: Coat 18; Sweater 8; Slip 6; Stockings 3; Shoes 7; etc., etc. In cases where people have been bombed, they can claim assistance under the Government War Damage Scheme, and are given, by the Assistance Board, a special supply of emergency coupons. Unfortunately in many cases where families have lost everything, this assistance is not enough. It is then that used clothing, which does not need coupons, can be carefully distributed.

But Great Britain has had many calls throughout these last five years to assist men, women and children with clothing, other than those who have been bombed. Refugees have landed in England and Scotland from France, Holland, Belgium, the Channel Islands and Malta. I was told that the people who came from Singapore and the Malayan Peninsula were probably the most tragic victims of all. When the women from Glasgow went down the "Tail of the Bank" to meet the ship that brought them slowly up the Clyde, they found the only clothing these people had was what they were wearing, and it was just suitable for the tropics. I also heard that repatriated prisoners, men, women and children, had only their last Red Cross parcels to claim as their possessions, and that shipwreck survivors landing on the rocky coast of Northern Scotland all had to be re-outfitted.

To meet the great demand for clothes, Great Britain has set up Clothing Depots in great numbers throughout the country. The W.V.S., working closely with the Ministry of Health, is responsible for a tremendous amount of all the clothing which is distributed to those in distress.

Clothing Depots

Generous gifts in clothing have been sent to the British from all over the world. In every Clothing Depot, one finds beautiful things from the American and Canadian Red Cross, the I.O.D.E., Bundles for Britain and V-Bundles, clothes for men, women and children, patchwork quilts, which are admired by everyone, utility bags, layettes, etc., etc. It was most gratifying to hear the sincere expressions of appreciation given by the women in charge of the depots visited. "It's the thoughtfulness that goes in—the little hair ribbons tucked in pockets, handkerchiefs to match dresses." Over and over again, I heard W.V.S. members say, "Your Canadian women are the most wonderful knitters and sewers", and then again, "we love the dark blue coats with the brass buttons which have 'Canada' stamped on them."

The W.V.S. has the privilege of purchasing and distributing large amounts of clothing on behalf of the Lord Mayor of London Air Raid Distress Fund, and these clothes and boots supplement the gifts from overseas.

The Ministry of Shipping has arranged for free transport for all clothing, the Ministry of War Transport for reduced railway charges and all the Railway Executive Committee for the waiving of Port Dues and Dock Charges whenever possible. The Ministry of Health bear costs of transport not provided for by voluntary effort and provide storage, while the Board of Trade has granted W.V.S. a free Import Licence. The W.V.S. is not able to accept the responsibility of clearing and delivering cases for individuals or for specified places. Distribution is made on a percentage basis between Civil Defence Regions of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The following factors are taken into account in working out the allocation percentages:—

Bombing.—The population of each Region; the population of the vulnerable areas in the Region; the number of children evacuated from these areas; and in addition when applicable, the extent of the bombing and hence the consumption of clothing during the previous quarter.

Evacuees and Refugees.—The number of evacuees (unaccompanied children and mothers and children) and foreign and other refugees in each Region.

Categories.—Whether the items are suitable for men, women or children.

Of the clothing for children under five years, 20 per cent goes to the Central Stores for War Nurseries set up in the Regions.

Cases are sorted at the dock and then sent direct to the Regional Clothing Depot which serves as a Clearing House; in the case of small shipments, to the nearest Regional Store. It is sorted and repacked before being sent out to County and County Borough Depots. The Regional Administrator, who is familiar with the day-to-day needs of every part of her own Region, decides, on a similar basis to that on which national allocations are made, in what proportions gifts will be sent out. The County Organizer supplies to Centres which actually issue to individuals, from Clothing Depots, and also supply Rest Centres. These Rest Centres are set up by the Local Authorities (W.V.S. usually assisting in the Staffing) in order to take care of people who have been bombed out of their homes. Some of the people, turned out of their beds, have nothing but their night things and, where the house has been demolished, clothes are a total loss.

All W.V.S. clothing depots are run with remarkable efficiency. The stock piles are kept according to size—for men, women and children. Each compartment for clothing has a card on which entries are made for all incoming and outgoing goods. The women handling the clothes have been trained to keep careful records, which are tabulated each month and sent to Regional Headquarters, then to the Headquarters in London. In this Clothing Office, the Secretary knows exactly what the situation is in each depot, each month, throughout the year.

Every depot is kept spotlessly clean, clothes being well aired from time to time, to avoid moths. Gay chintz curtains cover the shelves. Every volunteer is trained to deal with the distressed, and for this reason all show extraordinary tact and patience in the distribution of clothing. Some of the extra coupons which are given to people who have been bombed must be given up in exchange for new clothing distributed by W.V.S. W.V.S. hands over all these coupons to the Board of Trade as the Free Import Licence is only issued on the condition that the coupon regulations are strictly observed. Curiously enough, this coupon system has helped considerably. The fact that coupons must be handed over in exchange for clothes creates the usual atmosphere of shopping and so, by restoring something which is normal and familiar in everyday life, is a considerable help in maintaining morale.

Children's Clothing Exchanges

These exchanges have been set up in many cities and are most popular with women who have growing families. Local authorities pay all overhead connected with the premises and there are no set regulations—each centre making their own rules. Women bring clothing to be exchanged, which is examined by a committee who pass on whether it should be accepted or not. The standard of merchandise in each Exchange varies according to the district it is in. If the clothing is accepted, the woman is given "points". This information is put on a card, with her name, the points being the amount she has to her credit. She can then take out any number of garments up to her credit. Should she not be

able to find what she wants at the time, her credit holds good indefinitely. Clothes rate in points usually according to the demand. For instance, rubber boots would probably bring a greater number of points than a child's dress.

In setting up such a depot, a drive is made for good used clothing. Each garment is marked by points as though priced. There is no charge made for exchanging clothes.

THE UNDER-FIVES DEPARTMENT OF THE W.V.S.

This department is interested in all matters connected with the welfare of children under five, and a member of the department serves on a number of wartime groups and committees of the Ministry of Health. It also maintains a close contact with various volunteer organizations. Its principal activity is to make arrangements for London children under five who have to be evacuated to residential war nurseries or to billets supervised by the Children's Country Holidays Fund. It is responsible for these arrangements from the time the application is received until the children arrive at the country nurseries. Besides the evacuation branch, one section of the department helps nurseries to find staff; another section works with non-residential wartime nurseries (for children of women in employment), and still another obtaining toys, and organizing toy-making schemes. The Under-Fives Department administers the official Under-Fives Clothing Scheme in co-operation with the London County Council.

All nurseries in the country come under the jurisdiction of the Health Departments of the Local Authorities, who are responsible to the Ministry of Health. W.V.S. members give great assistance to the Local Authorities in all this work.

Wartime Nurseries

The establishment of wartime nurseries is approved by the Ministry of Health at the request of the Ministry of Labour where there is a shortage of women workers. These nurseries are in two main groups: (a) Wartime nurseries administered by the Maternity and Child Welfare Authorities under the Ministry of Health; (b) Wartime nursery classes administered by Education Authorities under the Board of Education. Both care for the children of women in employment. Wartime nurseries include those open during the day only, and those open for 24 hours to meet the needs of shift workers. Although there are a small number of part-time nurseries whose hours of opening correspond roughly to school hours, the majority are whole-time nurseries taking 40 children, mostly of the 2-5 age group, though provision is made for 0-2 years as well.

The equipment is provided by the Ministry of Health and the cost of establishment and maintenance is borne by the Treasury. The mothers, however, pay 1s. per day for each child and 1s. 6d. if a child sleeps at the nursery.

Many of these nurseries have been built of prefabricated materials on blitzed areas that have been cleared. They are modern architecture—low with plenty of windows, painted in cheerful colour schemes—the equipment most up-to-date.

In all the nursery schools I visited, the children looked remarkably well, were very happy and well mannered. Matrons told me that mothers were now particularly keen about day nurseries and that many had benefited by the guidance they had received in the care and cleanliness of their children.

Wartime Nursery Classes

Wartime nursery classes are administered by the Education Authorities under the Board of Education. Existing classes which formerly admitted no child younger than three, are now taking two-year-olds where the premises are

suitable. A certain number are opened for longer than normal hours. These classes are usually accommodated either in existing school premises, or in huts set up in the school grounds.

Where there are play centres and school meals for the older children, arrangements have been made for the nursery classes to participate.

W.V.S. Receiving Nurseries

All children passed by the Metropolitan Evacuation Panel for nurseries and supervised billets in the country have to go through one of the Receiving Nurseries in London. No child can be admitted without a medical certificate, which must be signed and dated not more than 48 hours before. The children spend a minimum of 48 hours at the Receiving Nursery, during which time they are thoroughly examined by the doctor attached to the nursery.

"Regents Nursery", one of three in London, is in a particularly nice district—very well furnished. The day I visited it, 22 children were having tea, 12 who had left their parents that afternoon. There was not a tear, each child behaving remarkably well. I realized that all were War Babies and that most had probably had the training of a war nursery. The air raid shelter, which was provided for the children, made me realize the difficulties matrons and staff are up against when the "Alert" signal goes. To have to transfer little children from their cots to bunks in a shelter in the dead of the night, during a blackout, is certainly a definite responsibility.

W.V.S. Residential Nurseries

One hundred W.V.S. war nurseries have been established and partly maintained by gifts from the Junior American Red Cross, and the Surdna Foundation. These nurseries vary in size from six children up to as many as fifty, and are mainly for the 2-5 age group, although some are especially for babies from 0-2. They are sometimes in houses or wings of houses lent by the owners, many of whom help with the administration, and in other instances, houses or parts of houses are rented.

The Ministry of Health has provided the essential equipment and authorized the payment of billeting allowances for the children and for the staff in the ratio of one staff to four children. The Junior American Red Cross, and in the case of five nurseries, the Surdna Foundation, undertook to meet all other expenses. Each W.V.S. War Nursery, with the exception of the very small or isolated ones, has a local committee, which is formed by the Waifs and Strays Society, to help the Matrons and to see that the nursery is being run in accordance with instructions issued to all committees. In most cases the local W.V.S. Centre Organizer, or someone nominated by her, is a member of this committee.

After the United States entered the War, the Ministry of Health agreed to undertake the full financial responsibility for all these nurseries from April 1, 1942. This does not mean that the W.V.S. War Nurseries have lost their identity, for they still retain their distinctive name and each nursery has a plaque commemorating its establishment by the American Red Cross or the Surdna Foundation.

The Residential Nurseries I visited in Perthshire, Scotland, were all in the most beautiful country, mostly being established in shooting lodges belonging to big estates. In all, great appreciation was expressed to the Kinsmen of Canada for their generous contribution of powdered milk, and to the Canadian Red Cross for their gifts of honey, jam, chocolate and clothing.

The children were particularly sturdy. It was hard to believe that many had come from homes where they had never known what it was to sleep in a bed.

Regional Toy-making Schemes

Regional toy-making schemes have now been established in all Regions of England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, usually on the initiative of the Nursery School Association, whose organizers are available for consultation. As a rule the Chairman is the senior Regional Officer of the Ministry of Health, and the Regional Administrator of W.V.S., the Vice-Chairman, with the Board of Education, the Nursery School Association, the Civil Defence Services, the National Council of Social Service, and other interested organizations, being represented.

The committees organize work parties, arrange courses of instruction, supply toy-making materials to the workers, and distribute the toys when they are made.

As only voluntary labour is used in these schemes, the toys are gifts to the nurseries, but £5 is paid by the managing authority on behalf of each nursery receiving the toys to cover administrative expenses. The cost of the salvaged timber from which toys are made for wartime nurseries is met by the Ministry of Health, from whose allocation the timber is drawn, as even bombed wood is now controlled. Bills for other materials are paid by the W.V.S. Grants Committee and by the Nursery School Association. The distribution of these toys is left to the discretion of the regional committees.

NATIONAL SAVINGS

The following message was received by the W.V.S. in June, 1943, from Lord Kindersley, President of the National Savings Committee:

"As President of the National Savings Movement, I want to offer my thanks to the very large number of your members who have rendered such invaluable help in the War Savings Campaign, particularly in connection with Street Groups and War Savings Centres. The nation owes them a deep debt of gratitude for all that they have done and are doing thus to assist in maintaining the soundness of our financial and economic position, upon which not only the successful conduct of the war but the realization of our hopes of better social conditions after the war so largely depend."

Street Groups

The forming of street groups to sell National Security Stamps has been an outstanding success in the National Savings Campaign. Any housewife, provided she has a sponsor, may form a group. She makes application to the Local Savings Committee who will advance her up to £5 in stamps, and she is encouraged to get as many people as possible to join her group. She may start off by only having four or five in the hopes that they will, in turn, bring in other members. Arrangements are made by her for the collecting of subscriptions each week. If the group should become too big, she may delegate her authority to others, but is still responsible for her group.

Ingenious ways of selling have been developed by group leaders. One woman collecting in a certain district averaged a net £45 a week. The week Mr. Churchill was declared "out of danger" after his last illness, she said to every one of her members "Let's make this week's subscriptions a 'thank offering' for Mr. Churchill's recovery." She raised £678! In some towns there are competitions between streets. Records are kept at National Savings Offices showing totals of street groups. Streets are put in categories according to the number of houses on each. In one city, the chairmen of groups hold a joint tea—set their own quotas, which acts as a direct challenge to one another. Women seem to like the competitive spirit of selling, even if it is only against their own previous records.

Group leaders are able to exchange books of stamps into certificates for their members. Everywhere they seem to take great pride in their achievements.

General Sales

Each year the National Savings Committee put on a week's drive to promote the sale of stamps. They have been very fortunate with the slogans they have chosen.

"War Weapons" came just after Dunkirk.

"Warships Week" when the U-Boat menace was at its height.

"Wings for Victory" when night and day bombing started over Germany.

"Salute the Soldier" this spring.

Every day of the week, during these campaigns, there are special attractions—in the theatres, in the parks—throughout the towns. "Block Busters" are on display and plastered with stamps, mobile selling vans get into the out of the way places. "Raise the Standard" is a slogan that has been used for several years, and can be made applicable to any campaign.

Many towns, after an air raid, put on special National Savings Drives of their own, making their targets "A Destroyer," "A Spitfire," or "A Bomber." The worse the news, the more determined the British seem to be to back all war efforts to their very limits.

War Savings Centres

These are War Savings Shops where people may purchase stamps, certificates and bonds. They are usually small, bright and inviting. As it is customary to have two or three such shops in the boroughs, women staff these shops almost entirely.

SALVAGE

All salvage work in Britain is done strictly under the direction of the Local Authorities; therefore its success depends on the co-operation W.V.S. members receive from these governing bodies. Every locality has its own method of collections. Some boroughs have handsome regal purple bags attached to the back of garbage trucks; others have boxes inside the "dust carts." Many towns have salvage dumps where the citizens take their salvage. These are usually cleared once a week. In London there are salvage shops where every type of salvage is accepted and sorted by volunteers. Here housewives on their way to "the grocer's," in passing, will bring in the odd bits of string, a tin or an electric light bulb. It must be remembered that salvage has been so thoroughly done for so long in England that there is very little now to be had. No parcels are wrapped—newspapers have only four sheets. There are practically no magazines to be found in bookstalls. Envelopes are used over and over again. Fats are very scarce. There is so little fresh meat to be had that bones are used until they are absolutely clean; but the need for them has been so well publicized that very few miss salvage piles.

Books are sent to the troops. Edinburgh collected 1,330,000 books during May, 1943, in its first Books Recovery and Salvage Campaign. Bric-a-brac is sent to Red Cross shops, and clothing to Clothing Depots.

Women will go to no end of trouble to dig out salvage. They drive dust carts, making calls on householders, explaining the great need for all salvage materials. With the co-operation of the police some go into districts with public address systems, making appeals. Others are willing to drive a horse and cart decorated with salvage to attract attention. In some villages at Christmas time, a Christmas tree made of brass and copper pieces is set up. Citizens will decorate it with other metals, trying to see how heavy laden it can become.

So important is salvage, we find in addition to the general salvage collection, women combing hedges and fences for sheep's wool, collecting dead matches for making clogs for workers in munition factories, empty spools for insulation purposes, cork to be reprocessed, buttons for women's work parties.

I found prices for salvage a lot higher than in Canada. Mixed paper brings \$20 a ton.

Miss Hopkins, W.V.S. Director of Salvage, was most interested in what was being done in Canada in the reclamation of household articles, toys, and the making of seamen's jackets. The shortage of volunteers has prevented this work from being stressed, but she could see its great educational and economical value. She seemed to be anxious to find groups who could carry on this type of work.

The Cog Scheme

In organizing the Cog scheme, Cogs, or junior stewards, were first enrolled just over two years ago when W.V.S. speakers were given permission to talk on salvage in all L.C.C. schools. To-day, there are enthusiastic Cogs all over the country and it is hoped that there will be more than a million of these officially salvage-minded children by July. The Cog badge is given as a recognition of the work done by a child after six weeks, and has to be returned when the owner is no longer engaged on active salvage work.

The Director of Education is approached in addition to the Local Authority, and where several Centres are within the area of one county education authority the County Organizer is asked to approach the County Director of Education. Head teachers are visited by W.V.S. and plans discussed to avoid unnecessary alterations of local salvage arrangements.

The teachers may undertake to organize the scheme and to encourage the children to make house-to-house collections in their spare time. In some places, two afternoons a week after school hours are set aside for children to bring their collection to prearranged dumps, either in the school grounds or at a W.V.S. depot. The Local Authority is asked to arrange to collect the salvage at the earliest possible moment, preferably on the day of collection. Where the scheme is being worked by the school, it has sometimes been found possible to bring salvage into the school curriculum. For instance, mathematics can be linked with the amount of salvage collected, pictorial statements of salvage collections or salvage posters can form the basis for drawing lessons, and geography can be taught in relation to the countries in which important raw materials are found. Keeping the interest of children is successfully done in some places by getting them to arrange salvage exhibitions. Sometimes these are held in competition with other schools in the same locality. The children, once they have been given the lead, are usually very keen to be allowed to set up the exhibition on their own, calling upon the teachers only in case of need, or if the teachers are over-burdened, W.V.S. sometimes helps organize the exhibition. Another competition is the largest ball of string, which has proved popular in some districts. Each school or group of children compete to make the largest ball. Collections of pieces of wool, rag-bags and other kinds of salvage are organized.

In places where the Cogs are organized outside the schools they are often attached to Street Salvage Stewards, in groups of ten or twelve.

VOLUNTEER CAR POOL—"V.C.P."

The Volunteer Car Pool started in June, 1942, when W.V.S. was asked to undertake the organization and administration on behalf of the Regional Commissioners of the Civil Defence. The object of the V.C.P. was to ensure that there would be sufficient cars and voluntary drivers available in emergency

to meet the need. With the restriction of gasoline for other private purposes it became necessary to create a machinery by which private volunteers could continue to place their services at the disposal of the authorities, even if they had no other purpose for which they might use their cars. The administration, record-keeping and the day to day running of the V.C.P. has perhaps been the most difficult and complicated task that W.V.S. has yet been asked to undertake, and it is greatly to the credit of those volunteers directly engaged in the work at Headquarters, Regional Offices, County and County Boroughs and the V.C.P. officers at the individual Pools that they have mastered and overcome the intricacies of the scheme. Some 15,000 cars are enrolled in the 570 Pools throughout England, Wales and Scotland.

SERVICES WELFARE DEPARTMENT

In December, 1940, W.V.S. became an associate member of the Council of Volunteer War Work, which includes the Y.M.C.A., Y.W.C.A., T.O.E., Salvation Army, Church Army, Methodist and United Board, Church of Scotland, and the Catholic Women's League. At this time the Services Welfare Department was set up at W.V.S. Headquarters.

Supplies for Canteens

The biggest job undertaken by this Department is that of supplies for the 1,145 canteens run by W.V.S. Most of the commodities sold by these canteens are controlled and W.V.S. receives one-eighth of the goods allowed to the Council of Voluntary War Work, the proportion being divided in ratio to the total number of meals served by each body. With chocolate, for example, the Ministry of Food bases the candy allocation on the number of troops in this country: 85 per cent goes to N.A.A.F.L. (Navy, Army, Airforce, Inc.) and represents the basic ration, the remaining 15 per cent coupon free is given to the C.V.W.W. to be sold in canteens run by the voluntary bodies.

W.V.S. has difficulty in obtaining enough chocolate for their canteens that serve Canadian soldiers.

Mending

Wonderful work throughout Britain has been done by the W.V.S. in mending.

For soldiers

Socks are darned (38,500 a week).

Shirt collars turned.

Buttons replaced.

One finds such signs over doorways:—

"Soldiers Repair Shop", "Repair While you Wait."

Sports equipment, such as football gear, is mended. Towels are patched. Service stripes are sewn on sleeves. In some towns, classes are held for soldiers to teach them how to mend. These have been most popular and serve a useful purpose by making soldiers conscious of the difficulty of mending large holes in socks, and the truth of the old adage "A stitch in time saves nine."

For libraries

Women are trained in book-binding and repairing of books, passing on this knowledge to "work parties."

For Citizens

"Make do and mend" Campaign. Everywhere women are being instructed on how to make over used clothing. This work corresponds with the "Re-make Clinics" operated in Canada under the Wartime Prices and Trade Board.

Reading Material for Troops

During the last two years, because of the dearth of good reading material for the troops, intensive book drives have been put on in various parts of the country (Belfast collected 1,250,000, Edinburgh over 1,000,000). These are sent to book depots, sorted and distributed to camps. Sorting newspapers for overseas is another big undertaking, 200,000 papers a week being sorted in one district alone. Box libraries of 40 books each have been made possible through the Pilgrims Trust and are taken to men in small encampments by mobile library vans.

Station Guides

It is probable that the W.V.S. in Scotland have been more publicized through the station guides than through any other service they perform, as some millions of men and women of all nationalities have passed through Edinburgh and Glasgow since the station guide service was started in 1940.

The guides in both these cities are on duty on an average of 12 to 15 hours a day and have such an encyclopedic knowledge that they are never at a loss for an answer. They meet trains, give information about times of departure, platforms and whereabouts of officials. They provide details for sight-seeing, recreational facilities and can be trusted to give sound advice for all kinds of problems that rise among the forces.

This work can be extremely arduous, particularly in the cold and the black-out, with trains running so uncertainly these days. The presence of the guides at the stations and the help they have given has been a great boon to the Armed Services.

Information Bureaux

EXAMPLE.—W.V.S. Allied Information Bureau, Edinburgh.

This Bureau gives advice, arranges for accommodations, home hospitality, and sight-seeing tours for all service personnel of all allied nations. Volunteer interpreters can be called on at any time. Yugo-Slav, Arabic, Yiddish, Burmese, Hindustan, Czech, Greek, translations have been made for the Naval Base. A day book is kept and all information transferred on a card index for 6 months' record.

Information Bureaux can be found in almost any town or city in Great Britain, but are run by many organizations. *Citizen's Advice Bureaux* are controlled by the National Council of Social Service, with W.V.S. volunteers in many instances, manning them. Additional information on Citizens' Advice Bureaux is available from the National Council of Social Service, Inc., 26 Bedford Square, London, W.C.I.

Hospitality

Home Hospitality is arranged for the men and women of the Services through many channels such as canteens, hostels, recreational centres or committees on "Village Hospitality". Women of Britain have been most generous in sharing their homes and their rationed foods with overseas troops.

Entertainment Vans

All over England, Scotland and Wales, British soldiers are stationed in small groups in villages, on farms in isolated spots. Recreational facilities for these men are few for the expense of providing halls, equipment and entertainment would be prohibitive. For this reason the W.V.S. and other organizations send out Entertainment Vans to groups of soldiers all around the countryside. These vans are small, holding a piano and a victrola. They are usually manned by two girls, who drive up to the camp, take the loud speaker into the hut and put on a concert for the men for about an hour. It is easy to understand why this service is most popular.

Camouflage Netting

Work parties to garnish camouflage nets have been organized in many places. Some 3,500 nets a week are completed for the Army and Home Guard. Women belonging to the Housewives' Section do most of this work as it can be done in sheds, empty stores or large rooms in the district.

MISCELLANEOUS ACTIVITIES OF W.V.S.

Industrial Billeting

Under the direction of the Ministry of Labour, and National Service, W.V.S. assists in making industrial billeting surveys. It also arranges to meet transferred workers at trains and escort them to the Director of Labour and then to their billets. Follow-up work is done by co-operating with hospitality schemes. The W.V.S. helps the government in every way to make life away from home for these people enjoyable.

Stay-at-Home Holidays

The W.V.S. has done a wonderful work in planning "holidays-at-home" for the people. They arrange outings, picnics, and games in the parks, outdoor concerts, and various amusements to provide general recreation for everyone. A great deal of credit goes to these women who participate in this strenuous pastime.

Knitting and Sewing

"Work parties" (women gathered together) can be seen any hour of the day, during any day of the week, in every city, town and village. They knit for the services; they knit for children of occupied countries; they sew children's dresses, soft toys, curtains and anything that might be needed for the nurseries. They sew for Clothing Depots. They mend for the hospitals.

The women have found these work parties to be a great morale builder. The sociability of them breaks the tension of the strain they are under most of the time. No work party can be a success without a cup of tea.

Hospital Aid

W.V.S. members give clerical help, serve patients tea, arrange flowers, give domestic help, even to manning the laundries in hospitals. They have assisted with diphtheria immunization. They pick sphagnum moss, clean it, and make it into surgical dressings. Work parties roll bandages, make dressings of all descriptions. The hospitals rely on these women to keep their vast storerooms filled to capacity at all times.

Co-operation With Home Guard

Voluntary assistance with the Home Guard does not release women from other national responsibilities. The principal jobs they undertake are as switchboard and telephone operators, clerical assistants and in cooking and serving of food, as well as driving motor vehicles.

Helping With Harvest Camps

This might be assisting with feeding, billeting or checking in of workers. W.V.S. women are ready to help at any time.

Tothill Junior Club

The following is an extract taken from a W.V.S. Bulletin:—

"W.V.S. mothers are always torn during school holidays. We have our office job, usually a particularly interesting one, and we have our children. We know that any organization which depends upon voluntary workers is always in difficulties during school holidays when mothers tend to disappear from their desks to look after their children, when either their already over-burdened colleagues are going to have to do their work for them, or else their office desks are slowly going to disappear beneath a mountain of paper awaiting attention.

So at Headquarters, joined by some of the London Centres, the mothers of thirty-five children experimented this Christmas with a Club for these desk-orphaned children. A Club room was found over the British Restaurant in Gloucester Gardens, Paddington, and arrangements were made for the children to obtain their mid-day meal there. A daily program was drawn up and visits were made to places of interest, including the House of Commons, Mount Pleasant Sporting Office, London Fire Brigade Headquarters, Victoria Telephone Exchange, the Zoo, the Turkish Halkevi, museums and art galleries and a never-to-be-forgotten tour of the Evening Standard Building.

The club will be revived during the Easter holidays when, among other things, it is hoped to be able to include some simple office jobs, such as envelope-addressing, in the program."

GENERAL NOTES

Volunteers of W.V.S.

The pool to draw on for volunteers in Great Britain is limited. The only women available are those with children under 14, those who are over 50 years of age, or the few who, because of husbands in the services, are constantly being moved from one place to another. But this very shortage seems to make all volunteers more conscious of the importance of their job, and therefore very reliable. I found that when volunteers could not turn up for work for some unforeseen reason, very few replacements were made, and those who were on duty, understanding the difficulties all women are faced with these days, just expected to do double duty. The spirit of all volunteers is magnificent!

The members of the Housewives' Section, who were organized originally to assist wardens in A.R.P., after completing their training have looked for other work to do. They have participated in practically every activity in their district—Salvage, National Savings, Canteens, Hostels, and "Work Parties." During the recent "flu" epidemic, they co-operated with the medical officers of health and the joint war organizations, giving assistance to those who were without domestic help of any sort. It was agreed that the British Red Cross Society and the St. John Ambulance Brigade should undertake any nursing required and W.V.S. give help with shopping, preparation of food, etc.

W.V.S. has a uniform for its members. It is both smart and practical—a 2-piece hunter's green herringbone tweed suit with matching top coat, worn with a plum coloured sweater or blouse. The hat is a snap-brim green felt with a plum coloured band, or if preferred a green beret, which has the simple crest on it. W.V.S. Brown shoes and stockings are worn. Very useful accessories in the way of matching purses and bags can be had.

The wearing of the uniform is optional, but all members dealing with the public or the Local Authorities are more or less compelled to wear it when on official business.

There are no ranks in W.V.S., and only simple bar brooches matching the W.V.S. badge indicate the branch of service each member is in, Regional Administrator, County Organizer, Headquarters Staff, etc.

The "ladies in the green uniform" can be distinguished easily, every place. Their interest has been so wide-spread and their work so efficiently carried out during these last six years that whenever help is needed people turn to them.

Records of Volunteers

The W.V.S. in being so closely allied to the various Ministries of the Government must have at all times a complete picture of its strength, the full amount of work it undertakes and the number of volunteers available for every emergency. Reports are made regularly to the Ministry of Labour and to the Ministry of Home Security and to all other Ministries the W.V.S. assists.

All centres are asked to send their quarterly returns in to the County Office to which they belong. The County in turn sends compiled records to the Regional Office and the Regional Office sends complete returns to Headquarters. Headquarters can then account for the work 1,050,000 members are doing throughout Great Britain.

CONCLUSION

I found the W.V.S. of Great Britain one of the most outstanding women's groups with which I have ever worked. The personnel throughout is of the highest calibre, each member being witness of the excellent training she has had, which with it has brought a discipline that is seldom found among volunteers. There is a definite pattern throughout the organization, which truly works from Headquarters to the smallest village. No one is ever "by-passed", and though at times there may seem to be ways of making short cuts, it has been found that by always going through the right channels, trouble is avoided. Every member knows exactly what is expected of her and accepts her responsibilities most cheerfully. I found an alertness among the volunteers which was amazing. After meeting Lady Reading, who is one of the most dynamic women I have ever met, I realized that her influence definitely left its mark on all who worked with her.

When I first arrived in London I did not believe the W.V.S. members who told me I would find British women tired . . . they seemed so bright and fresh themselves, but the longer I worked with these very people the more I realized what they had said was true. For five long years women of Britain have been under the most terrific strain. Britain's lack of preparedness for war was brought home to them in 1940 and 1941, and from that day to this it has been a continuous uphill battle. They have had no holidays, working almost day and night to be ready for "D" day, when they know that women will be tested as never before in the history of their country. W.V.S. has given outstanding service, and it has brought its rewards.

I am deeply appreciative of the honour paid me by the Department of National War Services in being sent to Great Britain to study the work of Women's Voluntary Services for Civil Defence in Great Britain.

At this time I would like to express my gratitude to Lady Reading who, though working under the most terrific pressure, took time to supervise the plans made for my three weeks' visit in Britain and who followed every one of my trips to W.V.S. centres with the keenest interest. Her thoughtfulness of me during times of great stress and her extreme kindness have left me with memories of a very great woman.

To the following I would like to give my sincere thanks for their invaluable help: Mrs. Dunbar, Mrs. Thesiger and Mrs. Aikin of the Overseas Division, the Hon. Barbara Baird and Miss Tomkinson of Region 3, Lady Ruth Balfour, of Edinburgh, and Director for all of Scotland, Lady Dolan of Glasgow, Miss Lambert and Miss Crabbie of Denkeld, to all the Specialists at Headquarters, to the many centre organizers and chairmen of projects, to the drivers of the V.C.P. and guides who took me on field trips, and the many other W.V.S. members who contributed to my most inspiring and thrilling visit to Britain in February, 1944.

Respectfully submitted,

MARGARET KONANTZ.

WINNIPEG, May 9, 1944.

